

The Elementary English Review

OCTOBER 1946

~~SCHOOLS DEPT.~~

A COOPERATIVE READING PROGRAM

PAUL WITTY and ANN COOMER

READING FOR MEANING

J. C. SEEGER

TEACHING CRITICAL READING

JOHN J. DE BOER

VITALIZING THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

ALICE MCCORMICK

BIOGRAPHY FOR YOUNG READERS

LILLIAN HOLLOWELL

HELPS FOR THE SLOW READER

LESTER R. WHEELER

AN INSTRUMENT IN REMEDIAL READING

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The Elementary English Review

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A PROGRAM FOR SCHOOLS TO ENCOURAGE STUDENT OWNERSHIP OF GOOD BOOKS



ONE of the primary aims of education is the proper development of children's reading habits. It is especially important that children be encouraged not only to read books under the guidance of a school reading program, but also to build their own libraries of worthwhile literature. A plan that encourages ownership of good books should do much to overcome the detrimental effect of most comic books, motion pictures and radio programs.

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1. Miss Dorothy K. Cadwallader, Principal, Robbins School, Trenton, New Jersey
2. Mrs. Dorothy Oldendorf, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Wilmette, Illinois
3. Miss Jennie Wahlert, Principal, Jackson School, St. Louis, Missouri

A large number of current books as well as established favorites are read by hundreds of school children under the supervision of these authorities. The youngsters then report on the basis of their likes as children and their interests as students, and the three supervisors evaluate these choices by discussing with the children the reasons for their preferences. This assures not only the selection of books that children will like, but also the correct reading level for the books chosen.

HOW THE YOUNG FOLKS BOOK CLUB OPERATES

The operation of the Club is simple. From the supervised reading program described above, the selectors will choose two books (classics and current books) on the Kindergarten-grade 3 reading level, and two books on the 4-6 grade reading level, at regular intervals throughout the year.

A set of the four books chosen (two on each reading level) will be mailed at our expense to each school participating in the program.

(continued on next page)

These books will be shown by the teachers (or librarian) to the children, so the children can actually *see the books before purchasing*. And since two books will be chosen on each reading level, the youngster is not forced to buy any one book. The only requirement is that the student purchase at least four books a year, to encourage the habit of ownership.

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Each of the books chosen will be offered to the children at an average saving of 20% of the regular retail price. These will be the same editions, printed on the same grade of paper and with the same binding as those sold at the higher retail prices.

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THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

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No. 6

Fostering a Balanced Reading Program:

The Role Of Parent, Teacher, And Librarian

PAUL WITTY and ANN COOMER¹

Most teachers have come to appreciate the fact that there are several problems which are common to every area of instruction and to every class. In the first place, it is increasingly recognized that a teacher's success depends in large measure upon her understanding of the nature and needs of boys and girls. Another problem involves a quest for the right materials and experiences. Successful instruction depends also upon still another consideration which is being increasingly stressed. Maximum educational results are seldom achieved in the school unless there is full cooperation with the home. Accordingly, effort is being put forth to bring about the participation and the support of informed parents in fostering the educative process.

Influence of the Home

In the area of reading instruction, the significance of home and school cooperation is at once apparent, since the reading problem does not suddenly emerge when the child starts to school. Many important forces in shaping his attitude and in determining his

later success have already been in operation for several years. In the home he has encountered books and other reading materials. He may have been fortunate in having parents who enjoyed reading for many and varied purposes; and he may have observed how other members of his family have turned to books for information or enjoyment. He may have had opportunities to examine picture books and to listen to stories. Under such conditions a child's curiosity is whetted concerning the meaning and the charm inherent in the black symbols appearing in books. Such a boy or girl, who discovers early in life that books can be a never ending source of information and pleasure, seldom has difficulty in "learning to read;" he accepts books as a necessary part of everyday living and learns to read as naturally as he learns to talk or walk.

In homes where children are surrounded by good reading materials, we find among even the young children strong preferences for certain stories. Some like animated books;

¹School of Education, Northwestern University.

others plead to have their favorite nursery tales recited again and again; while still others are attracted by stories of animals or pets. Most children enjoy books that contain descriptions related to their own everyday experiences. Thus one child, living near a bridle path, wishes to hear stories about horses; another, after observing a steam shovel at work, wants to examine books and pictures on this subject. Many children of four are fond of playing with trains; they insist upon hearing *The Railroad ABC* read so many times that they can say it by heart. One thirty-two months old child keeps a red string tied around the picture of a fire engine in *Farm and City*, for, according to his parents, fire engines are the "greatest thing in his life."²

Scientific workers also have stressed the significance of the preschool years in affecting the attitudes and development of the child in school, and many modern parents, who keep abreast of research findings, are becoming increasingly sensitive to their responsibilities as guides and guardians of young children. The modern school, too, recognizes its obligation to take into account the child's early experiences in planning the curriculum. Sometimes the school discovers a rich background on which to build; however, it frequently finds that its primary task is to supply experiences and opportunities which should have been the child's natural heritage in a good home. At any rate, the modern teacher knows that she must start with the child on the level she finds him and strive with the home to bring about his maximum development.

The Obligation of the School

In order to give sympathetic and understanding counsel the teacher makes an appraisal of the pupil's varied experiences and attitudes when he comes to school. In fact,

²"Publishers' Children and the Books They Read," *Publisher's Weekly*, October 27, 1945, pp. 1933-1945.

this effort is regarded as one of her main responsibilities—a quest for vital information about each child, his nature and his needs. In this search, she will use many approaches. She may employ interest inventories, containing inquiries concerning children's play activities, hobbies, and preferences. Thus, the teacher will become informed concerning the child's previous experience at home. Interviews with parents extend and enrich her understanding. For she recognizes that the interests of the child are best served if the parent and the teacher share information related to the child's development and together plan a balanced reading program for the individual child. Parents can assist teachers appreciably by keeping records of a child's interests and story favorites before he enters school as well as during later periods. Such data, with the child's health and behavior history, should be available to the teacher, for as Gesell points out, teachers must make an intelligent interpretation of each child's previous experience and background.³

The study of the status and needs of boys and girls is a complex task necessitating exploration in many areas related to reading. Teachers should, for example, become informed concerning the proportion of time devoted by children to going to the movies, listening to the radio, and reading the comics, for whether we approve or not, almost every urban child in America attends the movies one or more times a week; he listens daily and nightly to the radio; and he devours comic magazines and comic strips. Incidentally, it is worth noting that these commercial agencies do not penalize the child who has limited reading ability; nor do they force him to stay with one presentation until he has mastered it part by part, and lost interest in it.

³Gesell, Arnold and Ilg, Frances L. *Infant and Child in the Culture of Today*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943.

Although most teachers appreciate the impact of the movies, the radio, and the comic books, they frequently do not recognize this influence sufficiently to make these agencies effective allies in the educative process. Some teachers are, however, making significant progress as the following account shows.

One teacher spent the first few days of the school year making a survey of the interests and activities of her thirty first-grade children. The following tabulations show the choices of the class. These interests were used as a basis for class discussion, group projects, and for planning related reading. For example, discussion of the favorite comic characters caused the class to want to "read" and examine the Disney books and simple stories in which the elements of adventure and surprise were prominent. Noting the type of radio programs the children had designated as favorites, the teacher introduced the pupils to the phonograph recordings of *Peter and the Wolf*, *Little Black Sambo*, *The Five Hundred Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins*, *One String Fiddle*, and *And to Think that I Saw It on Mulberry Street*. When attendance at carnivals and circuses topped the list of favorite activities, books such as *Big Top*, *Come Meet the Clowns*, and *Three Circus Days* were provided.

The information derived from the investigation of interests proved of inestimable value in giving individual guidance throughout the school year. For example, during individual interviews, the children were asked to state three wishes. Many responses fell in the categories of requests for toys or animal pets, and were considered to be simply normal, wholesome reactions. However, in several instances some highly significant individual reactions were obtained. A timid little girl living with foster parents expressed the wish that "my mother will always love me." Thus, the teacher became aware of the

child's insecurity. Later conferences with the parents revealed that the child knew that she was an adopted daughter and was eager to have assurance of lasting affection. A boy from a poor home wished that his parents could "support a dog." He later confided that his parents had not permitted him to keep a stray mongrel he had befriended, and had turned it over to a humane society. The child grieved over the fate of his pet for a long time. A husky, red haired lad, who frequently quarreled and fought with his classmates, expressed a desire to "have more kids to play with." Observation revealed that this boy was an extremely sensitive child who was humiliated over the fact that his father was ill most of the time and that his mother had to take the father's place as a wage earner. Another boy, always in trouble, wished that he were Superman in order that he "could get even with the big patrol boys" who, he said "were always so mean" to him. Investigation disclosed that this child was suffering from a serious glandular disorder and related emotional disturbances. The parents were persuaded to place the boy under medical care and to cooperate in a program adjusted to the boy's limitations and needs.

"I wish my father would get well," was the expression of a boy who could not have playmates in his home because of an invalid, querulous father. "I wish my real father was back at home" voiced the anxiety and insecurity of another boy in a broken home. These simple responses, sympathetically and intelligently interpreted, helped this teacher to gain an understanding of her pupils and to provide the kind of school atmosphere in which happiness and successful achievement and steady growth were made possible for every child.

One value of the investigation just described was the revelation it afforded the teacher that her charges were restless, longing

STORY FAVORITES	RANK	FAVORITE RADIO PROGRAMS	FAVORITE COMIC STRIP		
Mickey Mouse	1.0	Superman	Captain and the Kids	1.5	
Three Bears	2.0	Tom Mix	Blondie	1.5	
Little Red Riding Hood	3.0	Orphan Annie	Lone Ranger	3.0	
Little Black Sambo	4.5	Captain Midnight	Joe Palooka	5.0	
Donald Duck	4.5	Terry and the Pirates	Smiling Jack	5.0	
Peter Rabbit	6.0	Jack Armstrong	Bringing up Father	5.0	
Three Little Pigs	7.0	Lone Ranger	Mickey Mouse	7.0	
Cry Baby Calf	8.5	Jack Benny	Little Abner	8.5	
Ask Mr. Bear	8.5	Bob Hope	Donald Duck	8.5	
Five Chinese Brothers	10.0	Chick Carter	Snappy	10.0	
		FAVORITE ACTIVITIES			
MOVIE FAVORITES		FAVORITE COMIC MAGAZINE	Going to carnivals and circuses	1.5	
Mickey Mouse	1.0	Donald Duck	1.0	Guessing a person's voice	1.5
Donald Duck	2.0	Bat Man	2.0	Riding bikes	3.0
Bambi	3.5	Captain and the Kids	3.0	Playing baseball	6.0
Screwy Squirrel	3.5	Captain Midnight	5.0	Building blocks	6.0
Bugs Bunny	5.0	Captain Marvel	5.0	Wood Tag	6.0
Pluto	6.0	Looney Tunes	5.0	Stoop Tag	6.0
Gene Autry	7.0	Superman	7.5	Plain Tag	6.0
Snow White	8.0	Lone Ranger	7.5	Checkers	6.0
Three Caballeros	10.0	Green Llama	9.5	Helping around the house	10.0
Cow Boy Pictures	10.0	Mickey Mouse	9.5		
Army Pictures	10.0				

human beings much like herself and the adult world at large. The study also demonstrated to her that these children were responsive to many forces outside the school room, forces that she would have to recognize if she were to become an effective guide.

Not only were the responses of the children of value in alleviating personal problems or anxieties; they were of value to the teacher in directing and enriching the children's reading. The teacher noted that a dominant interest was displayed in animals and in animal stories; she also observed that her pupils followed avidly the fortunes of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck in books, movies, comic magazines, and strips. Accordingly, she prepared large, illustrated wall charts describing various activities of Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse. She encouraged art work in which the children followed these themes. And since she had taken time to familiarize herself with other characters and incidents described by the boys and girls as their fav-

orites, she found opportunities to satisfy these interests and direct them into educationally valuable channels. For example, she did not condemn reading the comics when this activity proved a strong interest; instead she was alert to discover new books that were as full of adventure and as colorful and humorous as some of the tabloids. From *Donald Duck* and *Mickey Mouse*, her pupils turned to *Make Way for Ducklings*, *Lullaby*, *Katy and the Big Snow*, *Little Toot*, and *The Five Hundred Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins*. She was also ready to admit the justice of a child's remark: "Sure, *Little Toot* and the *Five Hundred Hats* are swell books, but they cost a lot of money, and you can get a second-hand *Superman* at Herman's for two cents."

Supplying Reading Materials

The teacher was challenged by the comments quoted above and attempted to provide good reading materials in abundance and upon suitable levels. However, this responsibility was accepted as a mutual concern of the

parent, the teacher, and the school librarian. Many elementary schools have established central libraries within their own buildings where children can read for pleasure and information, and from which they can take books as home loans.

To facilitate the best use of this central collection of books, many elementary schools are employing a full time librarian, trained in library science, and in child psychology. Such a person, enthusiastic and well qualified, can make the library one of the most inviting spots in the building; in fact, in the words of Phyllis Fenner, it becomes "the living room of the school."⁴ Here a lasting love for books can develop in every child—or unfortunately the reverse can be true also, if the librarian conceives her job as one of seeing that each child reads books strictly on a required grade level and makes only formal reading reports.

In selecting books the trained librarian works with the teacher. Both become familiar with the help offered by the *Children's Catalog*, the *American Library Association Book List*, the *Horn Book*, and the excellent reviews in periodicals such as *Childhood Education*, the *Elementary English Review*, *Story Parade*, and *Child Life*. The librarian's interest in child development will enable her to cooperate with teachers in gaining an understanding of each child; she will then endeavor to provide varied reading materials to satisfy the individual needs of the boys and girls. In locating stories of particular suitability for classes or individuals she will avail herself of the subject indexes and guides such as those developed by the American Library Association.

The librarian will also become acquainted with the good literature that book companies are publishing at low cost for use in every

grade from the kindergarten to the high school. *The Unit Study Series*, the *Follett* and *Whitman* publications and the *Cadmus Books* are examples of such books. Other companies, too, are publishing series of books dealing with current topics such as the *New World Neighbors*. In these books the child is provided with stories of literary excellence and, at the same time, with subject matter that leads to more effective reading in the social studies program. Science stories also receive serious attention in an effort to foster a balanced reading program. In addition, the school librarian will aid teachers and pupils in selecting books that relate to centers of interest in the social sciences. And to offer additional motivation and relevant extension of experience the library will make books available that are rich in the elements of humor, excitement, adventure or surprise—such books for the primary grades as: *Peter Churchmouse*, *Pelle's New Suit*, *Five Chinese Brothers*, *Mike Mulligan and his Steam Shovel*, *Donald Duck and His Nephews*, *Angus and the Ducks*, *Seven Diving Ducks*, *Millions of Cats*, *Angelo the Naughty One*, *Make Way for Ducklings*, *Little House*, *Yonie Wonder-nose*, *Little Toot*, *Madeline*, and *The Fast Sooner Hound*; for the middle grades: the *Great Gepppy*, *Twig*, *Laffy of the Navy Salvage Divers*, the *Hundred Dresses*, *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, the *Matchlock Gun*, *The Mof-fats*, *Freddy the Detective*, *Mary Poppins*, *Paddle-to-the-sea*, and *Justin Morgan Had a Horse*; and for the upper grades: *Black Stallion*, *Blue Willow*, *Good Master*, *Call It Courage*, *Adam of the Road*, *Lassie Come Home*, *On the Edge of the Fiord*, *All American*, *Top Kick*, *U.S. Army Horse*, *Struggle is our Brother*, *Johnny Tremain*, *Yea Wildcats*, *My Friend Flicka*, *Shuttered Windows*, and *Caddie Woodlawn*. All of the above books have proved to be favorites in a study recently completed in the Chicago area.

⁴Fenner, Phyllis R. *The Library in the Elementary School*. New York: Hinds, Hayden and Eldridge, Inc., 1945.

There will be a generous supply of magazines such as: *Children's Playmate Magazine*, *Jack and Jill*, *Children's Activities*, and numbers 1, 2, 3, of *My Weekly Reader*; for the middle grades: *Child Life*, *Story Parade*, *Junior Arts and Activities*, numbers 4 and 5 of *My Weekly Reader*, and *Plays*; for the upper grades: *American Girl*, *Boys' Life*, *Building America*, *Current Events*, *Flying and Popular Aviation*, *National Geographic*, *Popular Mechanics*, *Junior Scholastic*, *Science News Letter*, and *Young America*.

The school librarian will send to each classroom a stream of books, altered and augmented as the interests and needs of the children expand and change. She will instruct teachers and pupils in the use of library aids, reference books, catalogues, indexes, and bibliographies. She will also be informed as to the availability of visual and auditory aids for school use. She may encourage creative writing by the pupils themselves.⁵ Book reviews by the children, informally voiced or written, will do much to advertise the books. In addition, a display in the library of children's art work depicting scenes and characters from favorite stories will encourage reading.

The school library will make provision for many timid children to prove themselves necessary members of various groups—for the possibilities of helping in the library are numerous. There are bookjackets to be displayed, magazine racks to be kept in order, volumes to be repaired, and books to be shelved. Such activities often interest poor

⁵See Fenner, Phyllis, *Our Library*. New York: John Day Company, 1942. Chapter VII, "I've Got a Story in my Head." pp. 75-84.

readers or indifferent boys and girls. In handling books apparently only to please the librarian by shelving them properly, some children may for the first time in their lives develop an interest in books that will lead to voluntary reading.

The trained librarian will understand that the reading patterns of any two children will be as different as are the personalities of the two youngsters. "But whether children are predestined bookworms, or whether they are to find their chief delight in occupations that involve physical activity, there is joy in books for all of them, though some may need more help than others in finding it."⁶

Concluding Statement

Thus the public school of America (through its faculty of teachers and librarians working in cooperation with parents) has a unique opportunity to bring into children's lives balanced programs in reading. The school representing "society's most extensive investment for its children"⁷ can not operate effectively without cooperative endeavor on the part of teachers, parents, and others who serve boys and girls.

In this paper, we have stressed the mutual responsibilities of these persons. Better reading habits will result when these adults pool their resources in an effort to understand each child and to sympathetically guide him to the realization of the inexhaustible wealth of information and enjoyment to be found in good books.

⁶Eaton, Anne Thaxter, *Reading with Children*. New York: Viking Press, 1940, p.11.

⁷Betzner, Jean and Moore, Annie E., *Every Child and Books*, New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1940, p. 33.

Reading for Meaning

J. C. SEEGER¹

It is a platitude to say that we teach reading for meaning. Practically everyone would agree that we should teach it so that meaning will result. It is like saying that a tool is useful only when it is used. The acceptance of this premise, however, does not clear the air completely. The point is that many children are not in on the plan. The teacher may know why the reading is being taught, but the children may not. Consequently, many children learn to read without learning to think while they are reading. They acquire a kind of casual acquaintance with the tool, but use it very little. They read, they recite, they answer questions, but do very little, if any, thinking. Possibly such children are in the minority, but there are enough of them to give us concern.

In the second place, we meet children who read for meaning, but do not think as extensively or reason or appreciate as completely as they are capable of doing. Probably this group constitutes a majority.

Then, in the cases of all children, there are inevitable difficulties of interpretation and organization which arise from the limitations of experience and maturity the children present and from the very nature of reading itself.

All of this means that we should not simply teach reading. We must teach the use of reading, and in doing so, we must teach thinking. The remainder of this paper comments briefly upon four approaches to that procedure.

First, let us consider certain skills having to do with the organization of material. One of the best presentations of this is found in

an article by Bess Goodykoontz, published a decade and a half ago.²

Miss Goodykoontz describes exercises for helping children to find principal ideas, such as naming paragraphs, improving headings, finding key sentences, recognizing the climax, taking running notes. She speaks of helping children to recognize the relation of ideas, of anticipating content as many of us do when we read, of arranging ideas in order, of outlining. She speaks of synthesizing ideas for use by reproducing from notes, securing material to answer problems, through summarizing.

Children do not learn this spontaneously. Any one who has taught college students has found many of them deficient in some of these skills. But even an elementary school child can acquire them to an elementary degree.

In the 1939 report of the University of Chicago Conference on Reading, Ernest Horn³ speaks of the importance of helping children to locate what is important, to appraise, to organize ideas, to retain and use what is read, and describes the inadequacy of many elementary school textbooks in the development of these abilities.

All of us are familiar with this inadequacy, especially in many textbooks prepared for subject fields. In this paper Horn says "a

¹Associate Dean of Teachers College, Temple University, Philadelphia. This paper was presented before the Annual Summer Reading Conference at Temple University, June, 1946.

²Goodykoontz, Bess, "Teaching Pupils to Organize What They Read," *Elementary English Review*, VII (April, 1930) 87-90, 93.

³Chapter IX of *Recent Trends in Reading*, compiled and edited by William S. Gray. The University of Chicago. 1939. Supplementary Educational Monograph No. 49.

single textbook in geography or history may contain as many as 2000 different topics for a single year's work—more than ten topics a day to be learned in a single period. It is obvious that nothing but formal and verbalistic results can be expected from such hurried and superficial practice."

Yoakam,⁴ in his *Reading and Study*, likewise warns against the danger of superficial reading. Children recalled only twenty to thirty per cent of materials which they had read only once, and even this low figure was reduced to seven per cent after a lapse of time. The implications are manifest.

Durrell⁵ reports a group of studies conducted by Boston University graduate students, following in part the suggestions in Miss Goodykoontz's article quoted previously. One student investigated the ability of children to (1) Supply minor ideas in an outline which lists the major ideas; (2) Select statements which best summarized paragraphs; (3) Arrange a list of topics in the order in which they were found in a story; (4) Match topics and paragraphs; (5) Supply major topics in an outline which supplied only minor topics; (6) Write original headlines or topics for paragraphs.

The percentages of correctness corresponding to the items above were, respectively: 65, 50, 39, 23, 16, 10. In another study, dealing with different sorts of skimming exercises, pupils were asked to locate answers to questions by finding proper names or numbers, and to find answers to questions when the vocabulary was, first, similar, second, dissimilar. Next, the ability of children to find suggestion for further study and to generalize from what they read was investigated.

⁴Yoakam, Gerald, *Reading and Study*. New York, Macmillan Co., 1928.

⁵In *Adjusting Reading Programs to Individuals*. Compiled and edited by William S. Gray, Supplementary Educational Monographs. No. 52. University of Chicago. 1941. pp. 149-150.

In each of these studies, it was demonstrated that tremendous individual differences occurred, that intelligence was not the only factor which operated, and that such skills could be taught. It is particularly significant that other factors than intelligence affected the results.

Manifestly, children need help in organizing what they read.

The next illustrations have to do with the place of concrete experience in developing understanding. Consider, for example, the third grade group in our Oak Lane Country Day School, who, studying water and steam, became interested in steam engines and what made them run. They read several descriptions of steam engines, with complete lack of understanding. Then one of the fourth grade boys brought a steam engine into class. The class ran it, looked at it, learned how it operated, then read the same descriptions without any trouble at all. Another third grade group, after a trip to a museum, became interested in prehistoric ages, built a museum in their own room, and read and talked about the prehistoric ages, displaying amazing familiarity with words and terms which without such concrete experience would have been utterly unintelligible. These were words which no list would suggest for this level. But words are meaningful if they are learned in association. If the idea is not difficult, neither is the word. We often confuse these issues in our teaching.

One summer we worked with a group of children who lived in a densely populated and closely built central section of this city. They had read about the city's transportation, about how the city gets its water, about homes. One would have supposed they had fairly clear ideas about these topics. Then we took them on a bus trip into the suburbs. We took them past a reservoir and they said, "What's that?"

When they entered the bus, they noticed the signal cord and wanted to know what that was. The technique of paying fares had to be explained. They went through the section of row houses into the suburban section of single homes, and many of them expressed amazement that it was possible to build houses otherwise than in rows. And then when they came to the Oak Lane School with its thirty acres of campus, they were even more surprised that so much grass could be found in one spot.

They had read about all of these things, but the ideas were not related to experience. True to the provincialism of a large city, they unconsciously thought that the whole world was like their own city blocks.

Imagine how vague must be the ideas of children when they meet much more abstruse phrases such as "the center of population," "the density of population," "the average rainfall," "the piedmont section," and the like.

We have seen children develop through experiences not only interest, but stimulus for reading, and ability to do intelligent reading in areas which are often thought far beyond them. But it is important that the experiences lead to reading. Some few years ago, a popular magazine showed pictures of two contrasting schools. Children of one school were shown atop a skyscraper looking out over the vista of their city. Other children in a formal school were shown at their books. The implication was that the activity school learned through doing without reading, while the other school learned through reading without doing. But activities should not supplant reading. They should incite it, and make it exciting and meaningful. Field trips and experiments ought to require subsequent reading of the most exacting sort. The magazine left half the story untold.

A whole new trend of thought comes when we consider the fact that there are different types of reading which ought to be approached through methods which differ according to the purpose for which the reading is done. We ought to teach children so that they become aware of the role purpose plays in determining the method with which we read. We have done much harm by encouraging children to read all sorts of material too rapidly. Most of us who read reasonably well read some things at tremendous speed, such as a not too profound novel, much of the daily paper, at least some textbooks. Other materials we skim to see whether we wish to retrace our steps with more care. But no one can read poetry rapidly and get out of it all the poet wrote into it. Much of the beauty of poetry is often in the tonal effect alone. Much of the beauty of the King James' version is in that same effect. Consequently, many words should be lingered over. No one would read a contract rapidly, at least, no one with any sense.

This whole topic could be expanded almost indefinitely. The purpose here is simply to call attention to the fact.

Another trend of thought comes out of the implications of semantics. A great deal has been written about semantics. In the simplest definition, semantics refers only to the various dictionary meanings which attach themselves to words. The word "bridge" may refer, for example, to a bridge over a river, or to a device one places in his mouth to aid mastication, or to a game in which partners are asked to justify bids. If we stopped at this point, we would find enough difficulties for children. But the problem is even more complex. It involves the element of experience. Toscanini reads much more into a symphony than could any one of us, just as an engineer reads much more into that word "bridge" than does any layman. In other

words, the experience one brings into reading determines the thoroughness with which he understands what he reads.

Let us illustrate this by means of two quotations. The first is from an account of a recent art exhibit, carried recently in a local newspaper.⁶

It reads: "A show of this sort would not be complete without Salvador Dali, high priest of the surrealists. His 'Imperial Violets' here is by no means so sensational as much else he has done. It consists of a vast solemn expanse of desert, a large plate containing a telephone receiver in the center, flanked by three dried fish."

This whole description bewilders the layman. Persons versed in modern art can perhaps interpret this description. But the layman finds himself at a loss because he does not know just what the artist is trying to say. In fact, he is not sure that the artist is trying to say anything in particular.

The second quotation is from a very well known source:

"Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?" said the March Hare.

"Exactly so," said Alice.

"Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.

"I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least—at least I mean what I say—that's the same thing, you know."

"Not the same thing a bit!" said the Hatter. "Why, you might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see!'"

(Then the Dormouse interpolated) "You might just as well say that 'I breathe when I sleep' is the same thing as 'I sleep when I breathe!'"

⁶*The Philadelphia Inquirer*. January 6, 1946.

Yes, it is rather difficult to be sure that speaker and listener, reader and writer, artist and beholder, understand each other.

Then there is another complication. Apart from dictionary meanings and apart from frames of reference are the emotional reactions which words incite. Take the word *chair* for example. It excites very little interest or emotional disturbance in the minds of most people; about as much as the word *oyster*. But let us consider the case of that lady in this audience upon whom some of us eavesdropped yesterday as she spoke about the two pairs of nylons which she had ruined; or the still more apt illustration of the condemned criminal who is to be electrocuted. "Chair" means something quite different in the thinking—better the feeling—of these persons.

There are some words which are loaded with emotional content. They leave no one cold. Think of words like "communist," "Jap," "the New Deal," "supervisor." All of these words have associations for nearly all of us. Some of them are pleasant, some of them are not. In many cases, the meaning we attach to these words is the result of pure, or perhaps one should say impure, prejudice.

As the semanticists have pointed out, it is literally impossible to define a word exactly, and we have to recognize this fact when we teach children to read. There are some who recommend that we employ Basic English widely in trying to arrive at community of thought and identity of meaning. It is in no sense discounting Basic English to say that this is not a wholly adequate solution. Nor can we accept the contention of some who suggest that we should eliminate technical terms from the reading of children. It seems better to use the technical terms, but to be sure that they are understood. For instance,

(Continued on page 261)

Teaching Critical Reading

JOHN J. DEBOER¹

The term "critical reading" holds a variety of connotations for students of the reading problem. To some it means simply the active rather than the passive approach to the printed page. To others it involves the ability to distinguish relevant from irrelevant data in finding the solution to a problem or the answer to a question. To still others it implies the existence of a spirit of skepticism in the reader, a disposition to evaluate carefully the reliability of evidence or the soundness of a conclusion.

If we may judge the schools by their product, we have abundant evidence of their failure to teach critical reading. College students who dare or care to challenge a textbook or to verify a fact in supplementary sources, or who know how to locate and organize material from a variety of sources, are relatively rare. Most students have leaned for so long on the textbook crutch that they are unable to walk.

Roma Gans discovered² that children who scored well on the usual standardized tests in reading performed poorly on a test of critical reading. She concluded that the ability to read critically requires systematic teaching. In another controlled study, carried on shortly afterward, Edward Glaser³ found that systematic teaching definitely improved high school students' ability to think critically. He found a close relation between critical reading and critical thinking.

We may conclude, therefore, (1) that critical reading is important, (2) that the ability to read critically can be developed through teaching, and (3) that critical reading receives little attention in the majority of schools.

What Critical Reading Involves

Critical reading involves the search for relevant materials, the evaluation of the data, the identification and comparison of sources, and the synthesis of the findings. It involves the capacity for suspended judgment and the interpretation of the writer's motive. But chiefly it involves a sufficient background of knowledge to provide a sound basis for judgment. Critical reading implies the existence of appropriate criteria in the mind of the reader.

Much of the literature on critical reading has neglected the need for the development of criteria. It has emphasized the cultivation of the demand for evidence, the discounting of emotion words, and the insistence upon clear and objective referents, but it has tended to by-pass the problem of establishing criteria. Yet there can be no judgments without standards of judgment, no criticism without criteria.

Kinds of Criteria

Types and levels of criteria can best be identified by a series of illustrations. On the simplest level, a criterion may be merely a question of fact. In Miss Gans' study, for example, the children wanted to know what a colonial kitchen looked like, so that they could plan certain stage properties correctly. They rejected material which did not contribute somehow to the answer to their

¹Professor of Education, Roosevelt College. This article is adapted from a paper read at the State College, Pa., Conference on Reading, Aug. 12, 1946.

²*Critical Reading Comprehension in the Intermediate Grades*. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1940.

³*An Experiment in the Development of Critical Thinking*. By Edward M. Glaser. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941.

question. They approved of passages which threw light on their question. The criterion of acceptance was the relevancy of materials to the specific question at hand. No other consideration was raised in the reading experience. It is to be noted that even on this simple level of criticism many otherwise good readers performed poorly.

On a somewhat more complex level, children are often called upon to evaluate the accuracy of an item of fact or the reliability of a source of information. An article in a popular magazine is usually less reliable than a paragraph in a cyclopedia article, and a description of a rocket ship in a comic magazine is usually less reliable than a chapter in a science textbook. Boys and girls should learn to distinguish between a Hearst newspaper and a report of the Department of Agriculture as to relative reliability.

Much more difficult and complex, however, is the ability to appraise the validity of a conclusion reached by the author. In this type of reading, the reader is called upon, not only to estimate the relevancy, accuracy, and validity of facts and arguments, but to decide whether or not any relevant facts or considerations have been overlooked or suppressed. Moreover, the reader must interpret what he reads in the light of generalized understandings previously reached. This is by far the most difficult kind of critical reading, but in a democratic society it is also the most significant.

This type of critical reading comes into play in connection with any newspaper editorial, any magazine article, radio play, photoplay, biography, short story, or novel. It is the kind of literary criticism that every consumer of printed matter is called upon to exercise. It involves such questions as these: Is the action of this character plausible,

is that incident typical, is the author's evident intention justified? An article on Russia in *Life* magazine or the *Reader's Digest*, an editorial in the *Chicago Tribune* or the *Daily Worker*, a leaflet distributed on a street corner, presents a problem of the greatest complexity for critical reading.

It is a common observation that we approve of the play, the story, the editorial, or the article that re-inforces our basic beliefs or flatters our prejudices, and we disapprove of materials based on assumptions with which we disagree. The semanticists and the pragmatists insist that we approach each new selection with open mind, ready to weigh with Jovian impartiality each new generalization and hospitable to any conclusion to which the evidence presented may lead. Actually, the completely open mind is present, among people above the moron level, only in certain highly specialized situations, and only rarely in relation to the determination of social policy.

In the reading of history, whether in the examination of primary sources or of a historical treatise, we tend to accept or reject on the basis of a social philosophy previously formed. There is no other way of reading history. The data of history are infinite in number and yield no meaning to us until we have made a selection in harmony with some defensible principle. We modify, revise, or even completely reverse the guiding principle as the evidence demands, but the process of interaction goes on continually, the data modifying or clarifying the principle, and the principle in turn giving significance to the data.

The Formation of Criteria

How are the guiding principles or basic criteria formed in the mind of the average reader? Are they the result of careful reasoning, of generalizations derived from

observation of the evidence? Actually they are the product of the culture and subject to the prevailing influences within the culture. As the cultural patterns change, the reader's standards of judgment change. When cultural patterns conflict, the reader chooses his pattern as a result of one pressure or another and evaluates the subject matter in relation to it. The reader who is caught in the center of the conflict is compelled to suspend judgment on what he reads—that is, he postpones the process of critical reading until such time as he can adopt some criterion.

Responsibility of the Teacher

If this analysis of the development of criteria is correct, what is the responsibility of the teacher in cultivating critical reading? First, the teacher helps the reader to clarify his own thinking, to identify his own assumptions. Second, the teacher helps the reader to analyze the issues and assumptions in the reading material. Third, the teacher helps the reader to broaden the background of knowledge out of which adequate standards of judgment may emerge.

We can probably make the greatest contribution to the effectiveness of the school in the teaching of critical reading by providing constantly, in every unit of instruction, a wide variety of reading materials. The variety should be great enough to embrace a wide range of interests and ability levels, but if possible it should include also a wide range of viewpoints. Comparison of diverging viewpoints will compel a degree of critical reading which is impossible when the children's chief source is a single textbook.

In the world of books, magazines, and newspapers we can find every variety of viewpoint with respect to the nature of the world and of man and with respect to the kinds of social organization most desirable

for man. In the United States there are few if any legal restrictions upon the dissemination of widely divergent ideas and types of information. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the people of the United States are effectively shielded, by an iron curtain if you wish, from all but the narrowest range of viewpoint on questions involving everyone's happiness, if not survival.

It is no accident, for example, that 95 per cent of the major newspapers in American cities opposed Franklin D. Roosevelt in his campaigns for re-election. Whether they were justified in opposing him is beside the point; the important thing is that they were nearly unanimous. During the San Francisco Conference, at which the United Nations came into being as a world organization, the headlines of nearly all newspapers of this country daily screamed their prophecies of doom for the infant organization. The newsmagazines, the digest magazines, the popular story magazines, the major press services, the newspaper chains, the majority of columnists, and the majority of news commentators unite in a systematic campaign to create antagonism in this country toward the Soviet Union. The stereotypes of racial and religious minorities which shape the public attitudes toward those minorities are carried in the mass media of communication. The same unanimity may be found with respect to the subject of labor and management relations, price control, subsidies, and other equally important public questions.

Restoring Competition in Ideas

For most citizens, including probably also most teachers, truly critical reading under such circumstances is impossible, because the standards of judgment which readers bring to the printed page have previously been shaped by a quasi-monopoly of the means of communication. It becomes the responsibility of the school, in a free society, to

restore in the library and the classroom the free competition in ideas which is essential not only to critical but to any intelligent reading. Introducing materials of limited circulation representing the widest range of viewpoint and belief may be a dangerous undertaking, but it is an inescapable responsibility for the school that takes the reading task seriously.

Just how early in the school program can we begin to teach critical reading? In the sense in which it has been discussed in this paper, we can and should begin when the reading process begins. The child who reads his first line of connected discourse on the printed chart recording a group experience should be confronted with the question, "Is it true?" If he repeats the words correctly, if he comprehends the sense of the line, but fails to consider the truth of the statement, he is not learning to read properly. Indeed, the foundations of dangerously bad habits of reading are being laid. His judgment with respect to the people and events in the primer and first reader should be constantly challenged with respect to his own firsthand experience with people and events. By the time the child has reached the fifth grade, he should be able to compare and evaluate two divergent interpretations of a news event as reported in the newspapers, or two contrary interpretations of the Chinese character as found in text- or reference books.

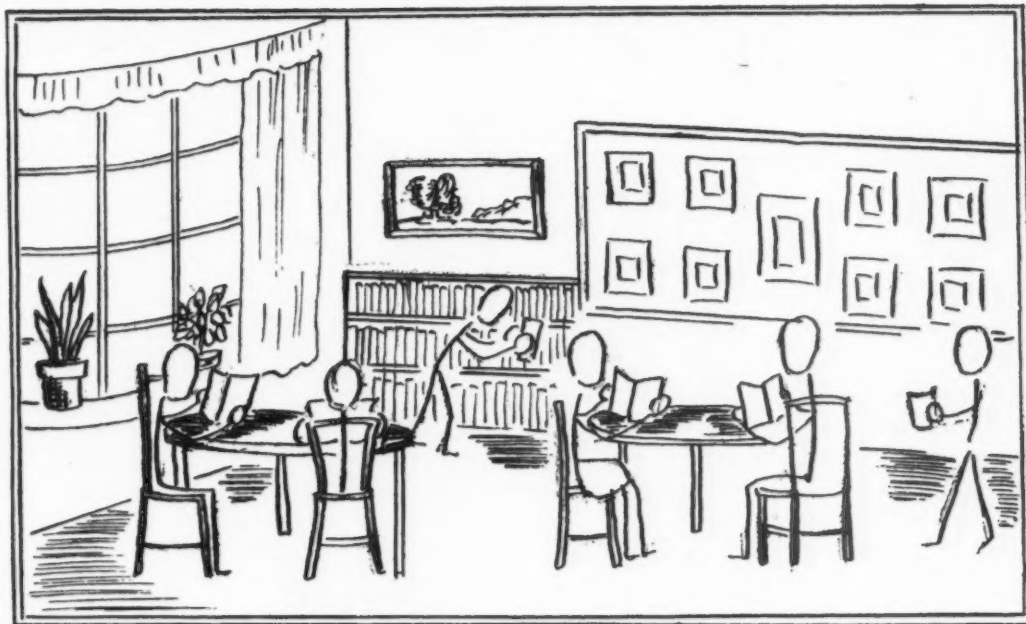
Critical reading does not imply the spirit of indiscriminate skepticism. It implies the use of judgment and the adoption of defensible criteria. For our day, it should not be difficult to formulate some of the criteria

which a democratic school system could approve. Certainly we can ask of the things we read today, "Is this designed to strengthen cooperation and promote world peace, or is it intended to divide and to lead us down the road to war and disaster? Is this designed to promote the well-being of all people, regardless of race, religion, or national origin, the humble as well as the privileged? Is this material written in behalf of some special-interest group capable of buying expensive advertising, or for partisan political purposes, or for the exploitation of the consumer? If this material has a bias, as nearly all printed matter has, is it a bias in favor of human beings in general or for a narrow group?"

The development of the critical attitude as one of the objectives of the reading process is not simply one skill to be added to the long list of reading skills found in the yearbooks and the textbooks. It demands a new kind of curriculum, one that is based on real pupil purposes, one that is in touch with real life. If we ever really taught critical reading in school we should be face to face with a transformation which would be far-reaching not only in its effect upon the growth in perception and power of individual children, but in its effect upon the very structure of our society. Small wonder that most schoolmasters continue to prefer the safer routines of uncritical acceptance of the printed page, the grammar period, the geography period, the spelling period, the penmanship period, the history period. They know that critical reading is dangerous. But they should know also that without it neither our free institutions nor we ourselves will long survive.

Our Library--Present and Future

ALICE McCORMICK¹



[This article was written in consultation with Miss McCormick's colleagues on the staff of the Columbus School. They are: Elizabeth Donabue, Mildred Gruber, Edna Morgan, Anne Kubaric, Ethel Spencer, Helen Flynn, Beatrice Rudder, Dorothy Cousins, Margaret Lane, Blodwyn Keene, Susan Callahan, Mae Fay, Mary Snyder, Roseanne Brophy, Eleanor O'Donovan, Edna Freedman, and Agnes Hal-loran. — Editor.]

The library books of Columbus School are housed in a very attractive first floor room on the south side of the building. It is usually flooded with bright sunshine because of the large bay windows, but even on a dark, dreary day it is a pleasant spot with our healthy plants, gay book jackets, and inviting little tables and chairs.

Time was, not too long ago, when the

library was new and rather cold looking. It lacked the appeal that draws youngsters to books in spite of themselves. We were partly to blame, because the building was so new and shiny that there was an unconscious desire on the part of all of us to keep the library a showplace.

All of us were very willing to admit that we were unfamiliar with a large number of books in the school library, with the result that we weren't too well equipped to discuss books with, nor to recommend books to the children. Even if we had been familiar with them, we lacked criteria to judge their value for individual children's needs.

We had no card catalogue, though our principal had kept a careful record of every book in the library in looseleaf notebook form.

¹Columbus School, South Norwalk, Connecticut.

The books had been classified according to the Dewey Decimal Classification and the shelves carefully labeled. However, the children weren't too familiar with the classification and this resulted in books being picked out and put back on the shelves in "hit or miss" fashion.

We also had the unfortunate habit of buying books blindly. By this we mean buying them because the jackets were attractive, the colors gay and the blurb on the jacket intriguing.

It was providence that guided one of our group to take a course in the teaching of reading. It had the effect of the proverbial "shot-in-the-arm" because it definitely brought out the need for much more activity on the part of the children and ourselves. It also proved the point that a school library can be beautiful enough to be a showplace and still be functional.

We had a faculty meeting and made enthusiastic plans for what we hoped to accomplish even though it might take a long while.

I. BOOK REVIEWS

To familiarize ourselves with the books in the library, we each agreed to evaluate at least *one* book a week, more if possible. We base our evaluations on the following points:

A. Is the book readable?

B. Does it have structure?

1. Is the plot a healthy one?

- a. Children between nine and fifteen enjoy simple plots.
- b. Children experience joy in solving something wrong.
- c. Treasure hunts offer common plots.

2. Is the plot clear?

C. What are the values?

1. Does book overstress wealth, etc?
2. What are the kinds of experiences?
3. What motivation runs through the story?

D. What are the relationships and characterizations?

1. What are the ages of the people in the story? Children like stories a step beyond them. Ten or twelve-year-olds like stories about fourteen or fifteen-year olds.
2. Can children identify themselves with the characters?
3. Are adult characters introduced as children look at them? Are they real?
4. Does anything go on in the mind of the character?
5. Are people presented merely as exteriors without feelings?
6. Is there a feeling of superciliousness?
7. Is the writer "superior"?

E. Style.

1. Is the book honest or fatuous?
2. Is it natural or overdone?
3. Is it well put together?
4. Is the English good?
5. Are good sentences used?
6. Are comparisons good? (Some writing may be awkward but will have factual and other good points.)
7. Is the phrasing good?
8. Is there good talk in the book—even in books for very young children?

9. Does the book ring true? Do people behave as people do behave or are they just too noble for words? Do they grow up? Do they get older? Are characters presented in an intelligent way?
 10. Does the ending come out of the book naturally or does the book just end?
- F. Where does the book take the reader? Does it tend to make the child less provincial by bringing him into other localities?
1. How much do you know about the place?
 2. How is the place presented? Is it presented as "queer" or as naturally different? Children must not get the idea that things—or people—are "queer" or "funny" because they are different.
- G. What social group is presented? Are the people different from us? Children need to be encouraged to read about other people. Space is no barrier.
1. From what standpoint is the social group presented? Wealth or poverty? What kind of ideas will the child get about wealth?
- H. How difficult is the book?
1. Does the author get you into the story comfortably?
 2. Does he get you into the place? The more mature the book the more frequently it does not get into the story quickly. The slow reader must be caught quickly.
 3. If the vocabulary is new, is the explanation obvious?
4. Is the conversation clear?
 5. Does the author keep you clear on movement of characters?
- I. Physical appearance of book.
1. Does it look interesting?
 2. Are pages long and heavy or is there much conversation?
- J. How is plot handled?
1. Are enough details given to present a true picture?
 2. Is it a series of adventures?
 3. Is there a sense of accomplishment?
 4. How long is the suspense?
 5. Is the plot finished?
 6. Are there good stopping places? (Poorer readers need this.)

These reviews are oral, and after each discussion each of us makes out a card (5"x8") giving as much information as space will allow. These cards are filed under their proper classification so that a teacher or a child may refer to them easily and quickly. The back of the card is left free for any comments or suggestions which may be made by children and teachers from time to time.

The books we review are from any age level, not necessarily those suited to our individual grades.

When this file is completed, we should be able to tell at a glance how many books we have under each heading and whether or not we need more.

Children should not often be required to write a book "review." Too frequently children are asked to do what they cannot do successfully. Much conversation about a book is necessary, however. Talk things over for *understanding*, for *enjoyment* and for simple *explanations*. Children may miss much—even the point—if this is not done.

TYPICAL REVIEW CARDS

The Blue Willow by Doris Gates. Illustrated by Paul Lantz. Published by The Viking Press, New York and the Junior Literary Guild, New York, 1940. 172 pages, \$2.00. (9-12 years.)

This is the story of Janey Larkin, a ten year old girl whose father was a migratory worker. Her one wish was to have a home where she and Dad and Mom could always stay so that she could go to school with other boys and girls of her own age. It seemed as if they were always packing up and moving on.

The only beautiful thing which the Larkins owned was a blue willow plate. How the plate helps to make Janey's wish come true brings the story to an almost "fairy-story" ending without seeming to be.

Social Groups Presented—Migratory workers in San Joaquin Valley.

Vocabulary—Not too difficult for a good fourth grade reader.

Children's Reaction—Sympathetic. Some of the boys thought they might enjoy that type of life.

Available—On request list. I obtained it at the Westport, Conn., Public Library.

Decky's Secret by Anne Molloy, Illustrated in full color by George and Doris Hawman. Published by Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston and the Junior Literary Guild, New York, N. Y., 1945. 120 pages, \$2.00. (9-12 years.)

Every afternoon at 3:49 when Decky got home from school, Engineer Fred's train roared over Decky's back yard. Something special always happened just at that moment which makes up the secret.

Decky finally shares his secret with a new found friend, Rez, whose small brothers and sisters were living in an orphan home.

When Decky and Rez go into the delivery business after school in order to help Decky's father, their secret is lost for awhile. How the secret is regained and how Rez's small brothers and sisters are reunited make up a very exciting story.

Style—Well written but problem of reuniting Rez's little brothers and sisters is solved too easily.

Setting—Near Boston.

Difficulty—Print is quite small for a fourth grader. Vocabulary not too difficult. Series of episodes. Good conversation.

Available—Columbus School, So. Norwalk, Conn.

II. BOOK CATALOGUES

We are working on a catalogue which we hope to have the children use intelligently and carefully. It is in three sections.

1. Title Cards
2. Author Cards
3. Call Number or Classification Cards

We also felt that the looseleaf notebook record we referred to earlier could be replaced by something quicker and easier to handle. The following card is a sample of our new record file.

Struggle Is Our Brother			4-5-6	FF
Felsen	Gregor	Dutton	\$2.00	
	1945	1946	1947	
Rec'd				

III. BOOK PARADES

During Book Week last November we started having Book Parades. They proved to be so successful that we have them on an average of once a week.

As the new books come in and are read by the children, the jackets are thumbtacked to a ruler and the youngsters (about ten at a time) visit the different rooms and tell about the books.

This "caught-on" in individual rooms and the youngsters welcome the opportunity to tell their own classes bits of information about the books they have found, not only in the school but also the public library.

Youngsters have their own little ways of giving these reviews. Some concentrate on the illustrations; some on the characters and others on the plot of the story itself. The creative return from each child is *more* than worth the time these reviews take.

The kindergarten too has caught the spirit



and about twice a week they visit the library. During this time the teacher reads them a story which they dramatize *in the library*. "The Three Bears" and the "Nursery Rhymes" are among their favorites.

The first grade has their story hour in the library, too, and when they have finished they sometimes make finger paintings of their interpretations of the books. We have framed some of these and put them on top of the book shelves. "Fuzzy Wuzzy" and "Tumble Bear" are among the best.

There are youngsters, however, who *do* enjoy writing what they feel on paper. Here are a few reviews written by some third graders:

SALVATORE PELLARINO

Monday, February 11, 1946

"Necessary Nellie"

This story is about a dog. Her name is Nellie. She belonged to five children who were poor.

Once Nellie got lost and the children were looking for her but they could not find her. If you want to know what the surprise was you better read the book.

RITA HALACY

Monday, February 11, 1946

This book is called, "Under the Tree," written by Elizabeth Madox Roberts.

This book has many kinds of poems. The poem I like best is, "In My Pillow." It is about a little girl who looks in her pillow. If you would like to know what she saw read this book.

MARGARET MEDLEY

Tuesday, January 29, 1946

"Adventures In A Big City"

"Adventures In A Big City," is a good book. It tells about Grandmother, Peter and Jack. They live on a farm. Grandmother lives in the city. They go many different places. One day in the early spring was Peter's birthday. He was seven years old. When he sat down he found two presents by his chair. One was from Grandmother. If you want to take this book out, go down to the library.

VI. BUYING NEW BOOKS

We are constantly on the lookout for new books. The *New York Times* and *Herald Tribune* Book Review Sections; the catalogues sent out by various publishing houses; the libraries and book stores as well as many other references gathered during the reading course have been a great help in selecting them. We now read and review the books *before* we buy them. The children take an active part in this, too. As they find new books which they enjoy, they bring them to school, share them

with all of us and tell us whether or not they like them. The children have earned a large amount of money selling newspapers during the war and a substantial part of it is to be spent on new books.

VII. CONCLUSION

We have so many plans for our library that we know it will be a long while before they near completion. However, we are looking forward to carrying them out with enthusiasm and confidence.

READING FOR MEANING

(Continued from page 250)

rather than eliminate the word *numerator* from arithmetic and substitute a cumbersome phrase, it is better to teach what a numerator is. If this cannot be taught, the whole concept of fraction is impossible.

Nor does it follow that resolution of verbal misunderstanding is a sure path to the elimination of differences of opinion or the avenue toward international peace, as at least some writers have suggested. For example, we may disagree with Fascism not because we do not understand what Fascists say, but rather because we understand exactly what they say. But it is important that teachers recognize the nature of semantic pitfalls, and to the extent that it is possible, make children cognizant of them also.

The possibility of expanding each of these themes is almost unlimited. What has been attempted here is not to develop any one of them completely, but to suggest the importance of each. In summary, let us review the four main ideas which have been presented. We have said, first, that reading is primarily a tool, that meaning must be associated with it, and that in this development of meaning we must help children organize their thinking. Second, we have said that we should try to see that, as much as possible, reading is associated with concrete experiences. Third, that we should help children to approach different types of reading appropriately; and finally that we should help children through semantic difficulties.

These are at least parts of the job of teaching reading for meaning.

Biography for Young Readers

LILLIAN HOLLOWELL¹

Although biography is one of the oldest types of literature, only in modern times has it been recognized as a literary form of major importance, and only in recent times has it been written for young readers. A glance at the lists of best-sellers and prize-winners, along with reviews and library withdrawal cards, shows biography competing in close second with fiction, both for adults and juveniles.

What is the explanation of this popularity? Those who deal with books and children say boys and girls are reading more biography because of the world in which they live. The radio, movies, daily papers, magazines, and conversation of their elders are concerned with world affairs. Deeds of gallantry and heroism are every-day occurrences, and the heroes may even be known to them personally. References to heroes of the past and present naturally lead to their reading more biography. Also adults are reading more of this type, and children easily follow the trend.

Another important factor influencing the increasing interest is subject matter. Early biography dealt only with the lives of persons of high rank. Recent biography portrays the lives of people in any walk of life. It may relate the struggles and achievements of pioneer researchers and bacteriologists about whom Paul de Kruif writes or artists, musicians, scientists, statesmen, and humanitarians; it may depict the courage and faith of Narcissa Whitman, who was one of the first white women to cross the Rocky Mountains, and shared with her doctor husband the hazards of missionary work to the Indians. It may tell of the not so well-known character,

Haym Salomon, Jewish patriot of the American Revolution, or of the French peasant, Jean Henri Fabre, who was always in search of fresh facts about insects of the field and wood, or even of that first great American advertiser and showman, P. T. Barnum. The only requirement as to subject matter is that the person be one whose life is dramatic and colorful enough to appeal to young people and be presented in such a way as to give the reader a sense of sharing in real human adventure.

Biography also has changed in its technique and approach. Older writers refused to see the person's shortcomings and failures, and emphasized the virtues and successes. Some biographies in recent years have gone to the other extreme of debunking and have over-emphasized the subject's faults and failures. Of the two extremes, the latter is worse than the former for young people because it fails to establish the proper appreciation for the worth of human personality. However, a good biographer neither distorts nor suppresses, but approaches his subject with warm sympathy and justice, and portrays the life as true and accurate as human skill can make it. Therefore, authenticity is an essential characteristic in the selection of biography.

The trend of modern biography is toward the narrative instead of the expository form, which results in a style resembling fiction and certainly makes for greater readability. The tendency also toward concreteness brings it definitely into the field of literature suitable for young developing minds. Fifty years ago

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most biographies were dull, abstract chronicles of facts, but now the writer fills in the details, which give color and movement to the picture. For example, Jeanette Eaton in *Lone Journey* vividly portrays the horror young Roger Williams experienced when he smelled the peculiar odor caused by the burning of a Puritan at Smithfield. Constance Rourke's *Audubon* is as full of life and color as the birds which the great naturalist himself painted. Cornelia Meigs in *Invincible Louisa* recreated the period in which the Alcotts lived as well as the home life of this famous family. In *Nansen*, Anna Gertrude Hall graphically describes the bitter three-year voyage of the great Norwegian explorer within the Arctic Circle, especially the last year when Nansen and one companion with three dog-sleds left the *Fram* (their boat) and started north toward the Pole, more than four hundred miles distant. James Daugherty in *Daniel Boone* pictures with true pioneer flavor the untrod wilderness where lived the lonely trapper, Indians in ambush, and the settlers who were trail breakers.

Authorities, who have direct contact with the juvenile market of books and children themselves, agree that the chief factors making for the continued success of biography are these: (1) the world in which we live; (2) the fascinating subject matter; (3) the popular but authentic style, whereby the author shows not only his skill as a writer but a sympathetic feeling for his subject; and (4) the distinguished format, type, and price.²

Young and old alike read biography for the inspirational value. The innate desire of the human heart is to achieve greatness, overcome handicaps, and strive nobly. Young people, in particular, have a keen interest in

personality, in the "secrets" of popularity, and in the problems of getting along with others and making adjustments to their environment. They like to feel that what has been done can be done again and that they are not attempting the impossible although obstacles may confront them. What could have been more heartbreaking than to have striven and dreamed of going to college as George Washington Carver did and then to be refused admittance after having been accepted with scholarship honors? In spite of poverty and race barrier, he won recognition both nationally and internationally as few men of his age have done. Another who had to fight every step of the way was Elizabeth Blackwell, the trail-blazer for women in the medical profession. Because of the age-old prejudice against women, she was refused admittance to all medical schools until finally as a result of a prank played on the faculty by a mischievous student body she was admitted to a small New York school. In spite of all opposition, she not only introduced new ideas into the medical practice, but founded a great women's hospital staffed by women, a medical school for women, and the first school of nursing in America as well as the National Health Society of England.

About reading biography Reed Smith has most fittingly said: "In a period of doubt and skepticism we need solace and stimulus for our souls' sake. It is a blessed relief, when we are borne down with discouragement and failure to turn to the records of lives that have been lived through and that can be looked at in perspective."³

In a similar vein, Mariette Hyde writes: "In the shifting sands of today, it is well for young people to find here and there a rock beneath their feet, to know that there always have been and there always will be splendid

²Helen Hok and Leo Lerman, "Biography for Young People," *The Publisher's Weekly*, CXXXIX, (April, 19, 1941), 1633.

³Reed Smith, *The Teaching of Literature in the High School*, (New York: The American Book Company, 1935), 363.

men and women who will climb out of the pits life digs for them."⁴

A by-product of inspirational literature of any type is the enrichment of character. What can teach tolerance, sympathy, admiration for the great and good, worthy ambitions, a sense of human fellowship and world brotherhood better than the reading of inspiring biographies of men and women who have moved the race forward and furnished our best examples of noble conduct?

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The Child Who Dislikes Reading: Causes and Remedial Suggestions

LESTER R. WHEELER¹

An aversion to reading is usually a symptom of reading difficulties. Such difficulties result from (1) physical handicaps such as impaired vision, defective hearing, speech problems, or poor motor coordination, (2) retarded mental development, (3) emotional disturbances, (4) educational deficiencies, and (5) the complicated combinations of physical, mental, emotional, and educational factors. No matter how interested a child may be in a subject or a story, if he is not equipped physically, mentally, and educationally with the techniques and mechanics that enable him to read the material *easily*, he will not enjoy reading. Children develop dislikes for reading mainly because the task is too difficult.

Interests and tastes in reading are developmental. If a child's interests are too immature for the materials he is expected to read, he will dislike reading. It is useless and sometimes definitely harmful, to restrict a child's reading to the "good" books before he is mature enough to enjoy them. Some of the classics have been spoiled for many people by the well-meaning but misguided teachers who attempted to teach the standard literary works before youth was psychologically ready to appreciate them. Educationally it gets nowhere to cram an adult appreciation of literature down immature throats.

The child should read on the level of interest, taste, and vocabulary difficulty at which he can derive pleasure and satisfaction

from reading. In order to make instruction most profitable and interesting to all children, reading materials in each grade should cover a wide range of interests on five to seven different difficulty levels. Scholastic requirements within the grade should be flexible enough to provide for the individual differences in abilities, personalities, tastes, and interests. The child who is working with materials which are beyond his interest level, or too difficult for him to master easily, dislikes the task. Often such dislikes develop quickly into permanent aversions, seriously handicapping an individual's future development and happiness.

Every child starts school with a desire to learn to read. Reading is a grown-up activity that even pre-school children try to imitate. With careful teaching and educational guidance there is no reason why any child should develop a dislike for reading or be a reading failure. The poor reader is a school failure, but it is the school that has failed rather than the child; every child can be taught to read and to enjoy reading if the right methods are used. Of all the children who have been referred to the Reading Center, there has been none who did not want to read, and only one who might be termed a "non-reader." This child was a paralysis victim with such badly impaired vision, speech, and muscle coordination that instruction of any kind was useless. Any

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child mentally and physically capable of going to school by himself can be taught to read and to like reading.

Obviously all children will not read equally well or learn to read at the same time. This is to be expected because individual differences in level of maturity and rate of maturation do exist. It is the school's job to identify these differences early in the school life of the child and to provide methods of instruction adapted to the individual needs. Careful preparation in the pre-reading period and good primary instruction can eliminate the problem of reading failures and aversions.

Why Does A Child Dislike Reading?

Following is a list of the causes of reading dislikes which have been found among the children brought to the Reading Center:

1. Inadequate reading readiness program. Beginning formal reading instruction before child is "ready" to read.
2. Lack of proper motivation for reading. The child may have no purpose for reading and see no relationship between reading and his other activities.
3. Physical handicaps, such as poor vision or hearing.
4. Reading materials that are too difficult. If the child's mental age is below the average of his grade, he is likely to find the regular reading requirements too difficult.
5. Poor visual memory, which makes it difficult for the child to remember the printed symbols of words and ideas.
6. Reading in material below the child's interest level.
7. Reading materials too mature for child's interest level.
8. Inadequate reading materials in the schoolroom appropriate for the individual child's reading interests and abilities.
9. Over-use of one method or one approach to reading.
10. Inadequate mastery of the mechanics of reading.
11. Interrupting the actual reading situation with too much word analysis, vocabulary study, or over-emphasis upon any one phase of the mechanics of reading.
12. Inferiority feeling toward reading, resulting from child's inability to master reading, which may, in turn, develop into a definite cause of reading failure.
13. The teacher who is a driver and a hearer of lessons instead of an inspiration and generator of interests.
14. The teacher who is unsympathetic, or who "picks on" some child without troubling to find out the causes of his poor conduct or scholastic shortcomings.
15. The teacher who uses ridicule or sarcasm as a means of motivation.
16. The teacher who does not know how to arouse and maintain a child's attention and interest.
17. Too much emphasis placed on repressive discipline in either home or school.
18. Poor social adjustment of the child to school or to his associates. This creates nervous tensions and frustrations which impair learning.
19. Too much competition in the school-room, which creates tensions and sets goals too far beyond the abilities or energies of some of the children.
20. Too much confusion within the classroom and lack of organization of teaching materials and lesson plans.
21. Overanxious teachers who push the child into a higher reading level before he has had sufficient practice with the easy materials.

22. Changing schools and teachers during the year and maladjustments and educational deficiencies caused by families who move frequently.
23. Fatigue caused by too much close work, a too heavy schedule, too many outside activities, excessive homework or home duties.
24. Excessive fatigue which results from poor physical condition, inadequate diet, poor eating habits, inadequate rest or poor habits of sleep.
25. Failure of parents to give adequate incentive for school. Child's home-life so geared that it is difficult for him to stay interested in school. Parents who lack interest in child's school life.
26. Family that stays "on the go," dragging the child around with them, causing overstimulation and excessive fatigue. Too late hours and too much confusion within the home, which contributes to disinterest, listlessness, and inattention in school.
27. Too many outside activities which crowd out the child's school interests.
28. A lack of reading interests within the home.
29. Foreign language spoken within the home.
30. Too much required of the child either by over-anxious parents who prod their children to bring home too high school grades, or by teachers who do not consider the individual abilities and difficulties of their children.
31. A general atmosphere of emotional tension in the school or home. This impedes interest and progress in learning.

Remedial Suggestions

If there is a child in your school who dislikes reading there is only one thing to do to avoid an educational casualty: teach him to enjoy his reading. In many cases this is not easy. It takes time, energy, pedagogical

insight, infinite patience and sympathetic understanding on the part of the teacher. However, the teacher's reward is great. Every child wants to learn to read and the poorest reader enjoys his task when difficulties are cleared away.

Check the following suggestions to see how well you are helping your pupils derive pleasure and benefit from their reading:

1. Make a careful diagnosis of the child's reading to determine what difficulties are preventing enjoyment.
2. Have the child's vision, hearing, and mental abilities tested and diagnosed.
3. Check the child's general physical condition.
4. Solicit cooperation of child's family in getting adequate physical and mental diagnosis, in carrying out recommended remedial treatments, and in giving the child adequate rest and relief from tension or distracting outside duties and disturbances.
5. Eliminate all nervous tension around the child and relax the child in the classroom. Punishment, dread, fear, or failure have no place in the child's reading program. Discover and alleviate as far as possible all child's personal anxieties.
6. Give the child a sense of security, self-reliance, self-respect, and importance.
7. Do not over-emphasize competition of child against classmates. Encourage competition with self.
8. Provide an abundance of reading materials on the child's independent and instructional reading level. Easy reading makes enjoyable reading. Provide popular picture magazines and materials such as *Life*, *Look*, the comics, "Big-little Books," *Popular Mechanics*, *Popular Science*, *Aviation*, *Boy's Life*, *American Life*.
9. Allow the child freedom in his reading activities. He will find his own interests and

reading level if sufficient materials are available to him.

10. Provide opportunities for child to talk with grown-ups and other children about the materials he reads.

11. Become familiar with the characters of the comics and children's books, in order to talk "intelligently" with the child about his reading.

12. Read to the child stories that interest him rather than the material you think he ought to enjoy.

13. Help the child to "read" pictures in magazines and books so that they will become meaningful to him.

14. Provide a definite purpose for reading. Have the child read for something, such as preparation for programs, debates, art projects, or to answer specific questions.

15. Give the necessary instruction and drill on reading mechanics in an activity distinct from the child's actual reading. Teach the new words and difficulties of a lesson BEFORE the child attempts the actual reading. Avoid interrupting the child's pleasure in reading with vocabulary drill, word analysis, or other technicalities.

16. Read a part of an interesting story and induce the child to finish it.

17. Interest the child in a story or book by telling him some of the interesting episodes, or facts about the book and the author. Be sure the material will be EASY reading.

18. Have the child re-read books and materials which especially interest him.

19. Have the child read about topics of current interests.

20. Use reading in real situations, such as learning to play a game, dramatizations, following directions, and securing general and specific information.

21. Use reading in dime store activity books where reading the directions is necessary to carry out the puzzles or construction work.

22. Introduce reading around activity units that can be correlated with school projects.

23. Provide audience situations for reading such as plays, charades, programs, prepared selections for the Story Hour, Sunday School activities.

24. Convince the child that reading is not difficult and can be unusually interesting.

25. Keep and show the child a record of his progress by making graphs, charts, pictures, etc.

26. Be interested and enthusiastic yourself about the materials that interest the child.

27. Use a variety of devices, methods, and techniques to relieve monotony and boredom in the child's reading tasks.

28. Adapt teaching methods to the learning needs of the individual child. No one method is successful with all children or with the same child.

29. If lessons are assigned in reading materials beyond the child's interest or easy reading levels, read them to the child and discuss the contents with him.

30. Play reading games with the child such as "Read-O" (14) or those recommended by Elmendorf, Jameson, and Perce. (5)

31. Help the child with puppet plays where the child reads the parts of the characters.

32. Guide the child in making use of his reading in his own creative, imaginative, and manual activities.

33. Provide ample time for the child to follow his own pursuits in reading activities.

34. To develop reading ability start where the child is. Scale down the difficulty of all required reading materials to fit the individual child's reading abilities.

35. To develop interest in reading, center

around experiences and type of materials which the child already enjoys. The comics meet the need because they are sure to arouse the child's interest.

36. Provide the child with materials that are within his interest level, but about one grade below his instructional reading level.

37. Do not introduce too much new reading at one time. See that there is no heavy overlapping of reading assignment in different classes.

38. Make reading vital in the child's life by use of bulletins, blackboard notices, tack boards and other interesting activities dependent upon reading.

39. Always avoid sarcasm, ridicule, and disparagement.

40. Be generous with praise and recognition for child's efforts and progress.

41. Provide opportunities for the child to establish a feeling of successful accomplishment in reading tasks.

42. Convert dull and monotonous reading drills into interesting play activities.

43. Give the child assignments in attractive books that are well illustrated and colorful, and written in narrative style with short, simple sentences.

44. Provide reading materials which have action, humor, and a fast moving story.

45. Be sure the child is "ready" to read. This means he should have a mental age of at least six or six-and-a-half years, a wide background of experience, good speaking and comprehension vocabularies, reasonable independence, and a desire to learn.

46. Help the child establish good reading habits and help the child overcome his special reading difficulties.

47. Recognize signs of fatigue or boredom as a signal for closing the reading period.

48. Develop the child's speaking and hearing vocabularies.

49. Increase the child's background of experience.

50. Mechanical aids, such as movie projector, phonograph, metronoscope and flash-o-meter relieve the monotony of a drill in the mechanics of reading and stimulate interest in correcting specific difficulties.

Interest is a feeling of pleasure and satisfaction that grows with successful progress in reading. It cannot be aroused by direct methods, but must be developed through indirect teaching and suggestion. In general a child's interest in reading depends largely upon (1) the sympathetic understanding of the teacher, (2) the extent to which the materials are attractive and easily mastered, and (3) the degree to which the child experiences success in his reading activities.

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(Continued on page 275)

The Flashmeter

AN INSTRUMENT FOR TEACHING READING

BERNICE FINCH HAMILTON¹

"How can I help Johnny learn to read?" has long been a question raised by thousands of teachers. Methods which have resulted in making hundreds of excellent readers have made absolutely no impression on Johnny. And then besides the "Johnnies" to be found in every classroom, there are the many slightly below average readers who have failed in some way to acquire the techniques that make good readers.

The reasons for these children's not having formed correct reading habits are as varied as the individuals themselves, for a child's mental, physical, and emotional stability are reflected in his reading ability. But assuming that a child has eyes that can see, a mind that can function, and a fair degree of emotional stability, he can be taught to read. Most teachers acknowledge this fact. Their greatest concern is how to effect this transformation.

The primary consideration in teaching a retarded reader should be an understanding of the child as an individual based upon a thorough diagnosis of his particular physical, mental, and psychological complexities. Such an examination of many cases reveals that retarded readers possess definite characteristics in common and that their needs in general are much the same.

Reading Habits and Needs of Retarded Readers

One of the greatest handicaps of a retarded reader is inadequate conception of relationships or associations so essential in the reading process. He sees letters and words as isolated items rather than as symbols made meaningful by their common purpose of ex-

pressing a thought. Since he cannot understand this relationship, it is not surprising that the words contained in a sentence fail to register a thought unit to him. The few words that he is able to recognize are too scattered to bear any relationship to each other, and he seldom has any method for attacking the unknown words in between. By the time he has reached the end of a sentence, much less a paragraph, he has no idea of what is contained in the first part. Since he cannot grasp the meaning of printed words, he gradually resents not only the printed symbols but anything related to the process of their interpretation. Because he fails to experience the success so necessary to further accomplishment, he builds up an antagonism that makes progress more difficult.

In view of such handicaps, certain specific needs are indicated. The first requirement is an adequate supply of sight words that the child recognizes instantly. The next step is to provide him with word recognition techniques as a basis for an independent attack on unknown words. This may be done by emphasizing configuration, likenesses and differences in words, homonyms, synonyms, and antonyms, prefixes and suffixes and contextual clues.

As soon as the child can recognize many words that he reads, he should be taught to see them in meaningful groups, or phrases, so that he will grasp their relationship to each other. Thus, his ability to recognize words and to associate them with a specific thought

¹The use of mechanical aids in remedial reading has been the subject of considerable debate. This article is presented here because it offers interesting suggestions concerning the use of one such aid. [Editor]

unit will result in more concentration, greater reading speed, and, therefore, better comprehension of reading materials.

What is the most effective way to teach a sight vocabulary, word recognition techniques, relationships, phrasing, concentration, speed, and comprehension?

The Flashmeter

While there is probably no single method that is perfect, one medium through which the best features of several methods of teaching reading may be assimilated and emphasized is the Flashmeter.

The term "Flashmeter" may be a new one to many, but every teacher knows the Stereopticon Lantern, which has long been used as a visual aid. It has been recently equipped with a quick-shutter, camera-like device and applied in various ways to the science of teaching reading. This device makes possible exposure of material from one second to one-hundredth of a second or for any length of time that might be desired, depending upon the purpose involved.

A basic sight vocabulary can be taught quickly and effectively through this medium. As words are learned they may be combined into meaningful phrases which will increase the span of recognition, as well as develop an understanding of word relationships and phrasing.

A Flashmeter Lesson in Reading

A typical Flashmeter lesson may begin with groups of geometric designs and plotted numbers which are effective in training keenness of perception in noting configuration, details, and relationships. These are flashed upon the screen at speeds varying from one-half second to one-hundredth of a second, depending upon the ability of the group receiving the training. Following that, a number of paragraphs prepared similarly to the sample given here are presented.

The Medium Bomber

WORD SLIDE:

altitude
release
flexible
accurate

PHRASE SLIDES:

medium bomber
forces and supplies
can release torpedoes

PARAGRAPH SLIDE:

The medium bomber has only two engines and it can fly at a lower altitude than a heavy bomber. It can release torpedoes as well as bombs. As it is lighter and more flexible than the heavy bomber, it is used in battles against enemy forces and supplies. Because it can fly closer to the target before releasing its bombs, it is usually more accurate in hitting the target.

TEST SLIDE:

Choose the right answers:

1. A medium bomber has (one two, four) engines.
2. A medium bomber flies (higher, lower) than a heavy bomber.
3. It is (lighter, heavier).
4. It is (more, less) accurate in bombing.
5. It is used to bomb targets that (do not move, can be moved).

It will be noted that the word slide consists of the four most difficult words found in the paragraph. These words are exposed, one at a time, at a speed that will challenge the ability of the group. After each word has been flashed, the pupils write down what they believe the word to be. The title of the paragraph has been announced and each pupil is urged to associate whatever letters or part of the word that he is able to see with the

subject and thus evolve a word bearing some relation to the title, if he has not been able to see the entire word.

When all four words have been flashed, they are then exposed long enough to give each pupil an opportunity to compare his list of words with those on the screen and to determine which ones he has right. No credit can be claimed for the wrong form of a word. An incorrectly spelled word may count as a right answer, but the word must be re-written correctly.

Next, several of the most pertinent phrases from the paragraph are flashed, one at a time, and then corrected in the same way. All words in a phrase must be included before credit can be claimed. Meanings of the words and phrases are discussed and any misconceptions cleared up, removing any blocks from the paragraph which is then flashed upon the screen. It is exposed for the number of seconds equivalent to the specific number of words per minute that will challenge the best efforts of the group. The test slide follows immediately as a check upon the comprehension and retention of what has been read. Correct answers are ascertained and any questions are answered. Then the total number of correct responses scored by each pupil is recorded upon his individual record sheet.

Advantages of the Flashmeter.

The Flashmeter has many advantages in teaching reading, not the least of which is its pupil-appeal. The pupil welcomes it as something "different" from the approach with which he has failed and against which he has developed a resentment. A poor reader's span of attention is notoriously short and, while he may not be able to concentrate upon ordinary reading matter long enough to read one sentence, here is something with sufficient action to hold both his attention and his interest. He does not object to looking at the

screen for the fraction of a second that it takes a word or phrase to be flashed. Nor will he protest at reading a paragraph which he knows will be on the screen for only a few seconds. Care should be taken during his initial experience with the Flashmeter that the material be simple enough and the timing slow enough to insure his experiencing success and establishing his self-confidence that here is something that he can master. After that he will take pride in his progress toward seeing words and phrases more quickly and reading paragraphs with greater speed and comprehension.

The Flashmeter is versatile in that it can be adapted to various types of lesson units in the field of reading such as book reviews, spelling, social studies, science, and even arithmetic reasoning problems. Whatever materials may be prepared along these lines can be made into permanent form and used indefinitely.

Whether there is one pupil, a group, or even an entire class to be instructed, from first-graders to adults, the Flashmeter can be used advantageously. It may be confined to one room or it may be moved from place to place, as it is quickly and easily set up.

For those schools which already have the Stereopticon Lantern, the Flashmeter is not expensive. The quick-shutter device can be bought and attached to the lantern. The materials necessary for making the slides are inexpensive in proportion to the results to be obtained through their use and the permanency of the slide library.

Disadvantages of the Flashmeter

On the other hand, the Flashmeter has its disadvantages. It will not turn poor readers into good readers miraculously merely by exposure to a certain number of lessons. Neither will it take the place of other types of reading instruction. While it is capable of producing amazing results, it must be used pains-

takingly and purposefully as a supplementary aid to teaching reading. This demands not only a maximum of teacher interest but also a knowledge of the psychology of reading.

Preparation of the material is a gigantic project. Only material of a certain type is adaptable to this kind of procedure, and there are specific techniques to be followed in its preparation. When the material has been gathered and organized into suitable flash-meter lessons, there still remains the problem

of transferring it to the slides and then binding them into permanent form. Slides that are used constantly become torn and must be replaced. So there is a certain amount of "upkeep" necessary on a slide library.

The Flashmeter is not for the teacher who expects miracles without untiring effort on her part. Neither will it supplant other phases in reading instruction. But when it is used by the right kind of teacher as a supplementary aid, it is a flexible and highly useful device.

THE CHILD WHO DISLIKES READING

(Continued from page 271)

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The Educational Scene

The National Council of Teachers of English will hold its first unrestricted convention in five years in Atlantic City, November 28-30. President Helene Hartley has provided, with the assistance of Second Vice-President H. A. Dominovich, a full and stirring program. Full details concerning the meeting will be published in the November *Review*. Hotels will not accept applications for reservations by personal letter but insist upon use of a special form, which can be obtained upon request from the Council office, 211 West 68th Street, Chicago 21, Illinois.

Notice is hereby given that proposals for amendments to the Constitution of the National Council of Teachers of English will be presented to the Board of Directors by the Executive Committee at the Annual Meeting at Atlantic City. The proposed amendments provide (1) that the phrase "chosen by the Board of Directors," as used in Article VI in connection with the members of the Executive Committee, be omitted to conform with changes in procedure already adopted; (2) that the phrase, "and with dues fully paid" be inserted in Article VI to describe the requirements for affiliates desiring to name directors to the Board; (3) that sections A and B of Article VI be amended to make the terms of the directors to run from the beginning of one annual meeting to the beginning of the next; (4) that section C of Article VI be amended to make the term of the representatives of sections of the Council run from the end of one annual meeting to the end of the next; (5) that in the event an emergency should, in the judgment of the executive committee, make an annual meeting of the Board of Directors impossible, the President shall poll the Board of Directors by mail concerning the omission of the annual

meeting; and (6) that a paragraph be inserted in Article VI providing for the election of alternates to the Board of Directors.

The Elementary Section of the Council has made available to teacher training groups and teachers' organizations a set of colored slides representing the best practices in the Language Arts in the state of Utah. These slides show language being used in connection with all the activities of the school day as well as during special language and library periods. Two recordings of the continuity as read by two supervisors at the Utah state meeting last fall present the philosophy of language instruction underlying the procedures pictured. The combination of slides and recordings make a fascinating hour's program for any college class or any teachers' or parent-teachers' meeting. They may be borrowed from the Council office for the cost of mailing.

D. V. S.

The Association for Childhood Education, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C., announces the publication of a service bulletin entitled *Children and Literature*. The pamphlet discusses the many ways in which children and literature may be brought together. Contributors include Jean Betzner, Mabel Altstetter, Beatrice Hurley, Laura White, and Marion Nesbitt, Margaret Spencer, Mildred Batchelder, Charlotte Chorpenning, and Nancy Faulkner. Fifty cents each and forty cents in lots of twenty-five or more. A 1946 revision of a classified list of inexpensive approved books for children is also available from the Association at twenty-five cents each, and twenty cents in lots of twenty-five or more. Another service bulletin published by the Association is entitled *What Is Happening to the Children?*, containing information from various school agencies about what is happening to America's children in

the postwar period. This pamphlet also sells for fifty cents each and forty cents in quantities.

The successive bulletins of the Association for Arts in Childhood, Inc., (58 Park Avenue, New York 16) entitled *Arts in Childhood* continue to present highly useful and interesting articles on various aspects of the creative developments of young children. Bulletin 5 (1946), for example, contains an article by Adele Franklin on "New Ways with Textbooks." Miss Franklin stresses the importance of reading good books to children. She points out that such books should be somewhat beyond the level at which children can read them fluently by themselves. She points out further that listening readiness is no less important than reading readiness, and that preparation to hear the basic story is part of the general preparation for the unit of study with which it deals. Questions asked by the children about the story may lead to additional teacher reading. Miss Franklin then goes on to give illustrations of the use of teacher reading in connection with social study units in the elementary school.

The April, 1946 *Newsletter* of the Bureau of Educational Research of Ohio State University contains a comprehensive listing with complete publication data of sources of teaching material in the field of audio-visual aids.

The gold Newbery Medal was awarded by the American Library Association to Lois Lenski for *Strawberry Girl*, judged the best children's book written in 1945. The Caldecott Medal was awarded to Maud and Miska Petersham for *The Rooster Crows*. The Caldecott Medal is given for the most distinguished picture book published during the preceding year.

A basic phrase list for use in reading instruction is published in an article by R. A.

Pulliam and Kathryn Watson in the May, 1946 issue of the *Elementary School Journal*. The use of this list is similar to that of familiar basic sight vocabulary lists.

Dorothy Kay Cadwallader tells in the April, 1946 issue of *Childhood Education* how the children in the Robbins School of Trenton, N. J., prepared two treasure chests of books for the children in Italy and what happened to the chests. What is perhaps of even greater interest is the fact that the author, who is principal of the Robbins School, also tells what happened to the children who prepared the chests. The same issue of *Childhood Education* also quotes from Mary Gould David's article in the *Hornbook Magazine* for September-October, 1945, an explanation of the treasure chest project:

"Treasure chests are collections of books that are sent by the children of the United States and Canada to the children of the countries that have been deprived of books through fascist domination or through the ravages of war. The chests may hold thirty books or one hundred books and are made according to a plan worked out by designers under the Book Committee of the Women's Council for Postwar Europe, 366 Madison Avenue, New York 17."

Here are the Junior Literary Guide selections for October, 1946: For boys and girls 6, 7, and 8 years of age, *The Monkey with a Notion*, by Glenn O. Blough, Holt, \$2.00; for boys and girls 9, 10, and 11 years of age, *Cowboy Boots*, by Shannon Garst, Abingdon-Cokebury Press, \$2.00; for older girls, 12 to 16 years of age, *The Tangled Skein*, by Alta Halverson Seymour, Westminster Press, \$2.00; and for older boys, 12 to 16 years of age, *Captain John Smith: The Lad from Lincoln-Shire*, by Ruth Langland Holberg, Crowell, \$2.00.

Review and Criticism

[The reviews in this issue are by Hannah M. Lindahl, Ivah Green, Dorothy E. Smith, and Jean Gardiner Smith. Unsigned reviews are by the editor.]

For Teachers

Treasure for the Taking. By Anne Thaxter Eaton. Viking, \$2.50.

A classified children's booklist by the well-known author of *Reading with Children*. Under such headings as Horses, Pets, Sea Life, Folk Tales, Myths, History, Religion, Flying and dozens of other themes of interest to children, Miss Eaton has listed and annotated many of the best of the recent books for young people as well as the classics that delighted boys and girls in past generations.

The list is apparently based on the theory that children's reading has no purpose other than "joy," "delight," or "fun," and that it has little or no function in the formation of attitudes or value-systems. Conspicuously absent from the list are such writers as Pearl Buck, Joseph Gollomb, Howard Fast, and Gregor Felsen, while the annotations on John R. Tunis (only two of his long list of stories are mentioned) carefully omit reference to the subject of race relations, with which so many of his books deal. Teachers all over America are looking for good reading material on intergroup relations, but they will get little help here.

Nevertheless, this book is a good and useful instrument. It will help teachers' and parents to give children the kind of reading guidance so widely urged today. In view of the appearance of so many new children's books every year, it is to be hoped that frequent revisions of the list will be made available.

Minority Problems in the Public Schools. By Theodore Brameld. Harper, \$2.50.

This new addition to the growing literature on intergroup education, a publication of the Bureau for Intercultural Education, is the report of a survey of administrative policies and practices in seven school systems of

varying size, selected from the East, West, and Midwest. The report tells of the status of the various minority groups in the community, evidences of tension and conflict, attitudes of school officials and teachers toward intergroup relations, activities of community organizations and school committees dealing with the problem, and school projects designed to overcome hostilities. The evidence seems to indicate in general that there is widespread concern about the problem, much talk and many committees and conferences, but relatively little basic action or change in fundamental relationships in the schools.

The Elementary School Subjects. By Luella Cole. Rinehart, \$3.25.

A detailed analysis of the problems of learning the three R's as they function in the major subjects of study in the elementary school. Based on research studies of recent years, the chapters provide valuable background for the supervisor and the advanced student of education concerned with the improvement of classroom techniques. The volume is not suitable as an introduction to the elementary curriculum or as a beginner's guide to teaching methods. The emphasis is primarily upon psychological analysis rather than upon the organization of the teaching program.

Diagnostic and Remedial Teaching in Secondary Schools. By Glenn Myers Blair. Macmillan, \$3.25.

Although this book is addressed primarily to high school teachers, much of the material, especially that in the junior high school sections, is of interest to elementary teachers. The discussion is not too technical for the non-specialist, and the emphasis is upon practical considerations throughout. Among the useful tables included in the volume are the following: Dolch's Basic Sight Vocabulary of 220 Words, The One Hundred Books Most Enjoyed by Retarded Readers in Senior High Schools, Two Hundred Fifty Books Popular with Slow Learners, and North Carolina High School "Spelling Demons."

For Children

Bright April. Written and illustrated by Marguerite de Angeli. Doubleday, \$2.50.

Once again Marguerite de Angeli has given us a story of a minority group in a story-picture book which is truly delightful. This time, it is about nine-year old April who lives in a Philadelphia suburb and about her family and friends and Brownie Scout Troop and is called, most appropriately, *Bright April*.

April's family consists of Tom, who is forever "bon-a di-bong-bonging" with his drumsticks, Christine, at present away at nurses' training, Ken, overseas with the Army, Papa, who proudly carries Uncle Sam's mail, and by no means least, Mamma, who is always a place of refuge, who can say to the little blue-eyed girl on the trolley car who has just pointed a finger at April with the exclamation, "You're brown!":

"Yes, she's brown and you're pink. Isn't she a nice warm color?"

And who can answer her daughter's anxious question, "Am I brown, Mamma?" with "Yes, of course. You are just the color of coffee with good cream in it. And you are just like your name and the month you were born in; dark April one minute and bright April the next!"

April's is a happy home life, for Papa works hard to keep their house in the run-down old neighborhood mended and repaired and Mamma works hard to keep her family, as well as the house, clean and neat and happy.

And April finds she is proud of how particular Mamma is when Miss Bell, at school, speaks of each one's responsibility for keeping the neighborhood clean and when some children who are not clean sit beside her in school.

"Maybe the teacher will think I'm like that!" she complains to her mother, but her mother reassures her, "Teachers know which children are well cared for and the ones who are not."

April loves school and loves her Brownie Scouts and is as thrilled as any little girl would be when spring comes and it is time to take the walk along the Wissahickon, through the woods.

She is thrilled, too, when she discovers she has learned the longest list of birds and

trees, thereby winning the opportunity to represent her Brownie troop at a supper party at Deep Meadow Farm.

But every once in awhile across all this happiness, comes a shadow which most little girls like April have experienced just because they are the "color of coffee with good cream in it" instead of pink—the shadow of discrimination. First it was the child on the trolley car, then the girl at Brownie meeting who laughed because April had said she wanted to grow up to be a hat designer and be "boss of a big store on Chestnut Street."

"You? Why, they never let—" the girl began, but Mrs. Cole, the leader, quickly slipped her hand over the girl's mouth to keep her from saying more.

Then, there was the letter from Ken, trained to be an architect and working in a laundry in Germany.

And finally, the supper at Deep Meadow Farm. Of course, Phyllis had never known anyone like April before and as April explained to her mother later, telling about her new friend, "You see, Mamma, she didn't know the truth about me at all. She didn't know at first that skin is just like hers, only a different color, and she didn't know what good care you take to keep my clothes nice and clean, and she didn't know how I like to read just as she does! I guess if she had known the truth about me, she would have liked me at first!"

"Yes," agreed Mamma soberly, "Yes, that is just it, exactly. She didn't know the truth. We must know *the truth*, always even when it hurts. The Bible says, 'Ye shall know the TRUTH, and the truth shall make you free!'"

Mrs. Charlemae Rollins in *We Build Together*, that excellent guide on selection of books for and about the Negro suitable for modern democratic society, has set these criteria for such books:

Does the book portray the Negro realistically?

Are democratic relationships between Negroes and whites emphasized in the book?

Does the book offer to both black and white youth human characteristics which each can admire and emulate?

Does the book build standards of equality among Negroes and whites?

Does the book help the reader develop insight into the real nature of the people portrayed?

Is the dialect in which the characters of the book speak accurate and representative?

May the book be read with profitable enjoyment by both white and Negro youth?

On every count, *Bright April* meets Mrs. Rollins' criteria.

This is, indeed, a book such as Langston Hughes asked for when he challenged writers to write books which would give America's Negro children "—back their own souls." For, as he went on to say, "They do not know the beauty they possess."

Moreover, it is a book little girls will love, pictures and all, as they have loved Marguerite de Angeli's other books. The tragedy lies in the fact that it may raise too many hopes too quickly in the hearts of some little girls. We move ahead so slowly.

Helen Sattley¹

My Dog Rinty. By Ellen Tarry and Marie Hall Ets. Illustrated by Alexander and Alexandra Alland. Viking, \$1.50.

An utterly charming story about an American boy from New York's Harlem, and his adventures with his remarkable though mischievous dog. The warm, human, and humorous narrative is re-inforced by a series of vivid photographic illustrations. One of the illustrators is a co-author of *The Springfield Plan: A Photographic Record*. Highly recommended for boys and girls from 8-10 years of age.

Doctor Elizabeth. By Laura Kerr. Illustrated by Alice Carsey. Nelson, \$2.50.

A new biography of Elizabeth Blackwell for the same age group as *First Woman Doctor*. The author has chosen to highlight different incidents, and although the main biographical facts are the same, there is enough

¹The writer wishes to thank Mrs. Augusta B. Baker, the faculty of Virginia State College, whose very favorable comments on *Bright April* have helped her to form her own opinion of the book as expressed herein.

new material in *Doctor Elizabeth* so that libraries will want to add this to the collection. Grades 6-10

J. G. S.

Dogs. By Gene Byrnes. Illustrated with photographs by Percy T. Jones. Grosset & Dunlap, \$1.00.

A most interesting and informative book for children and adults. There are photographs of fifty-three standard breeds of dogs with descriptions of each breed. These are interspersed with twenty-nine pages of full-page, full-color reproductions of the popular comic strip "Reg'lar Fellers" by the author. All present and would-be dog lovers will find this book fascinating.

I. G.

Heydays and Holidays. Illustrated by Grace Paull. Text by Laura Harris. Garden City Publishing Company. \$0.50.

This large, colorful, delightfully illustrated picture book is not just an ordinary children's almanac. It devotes a page or two to each of the great holidays, including the last day of school. The special pages for family and friends' birthday dates are provided with illuminated border. The last page describes the great bonfire which was made in Gorham, New Hampshire, on V-J Day. But the important thing about this book is that the holidays include Jewish as well as Christian holidays, and serves admirably as an aid in the intercultural education program.

The Runaway Shuttle Train. Story by Muriel Fuller. Pictures by Dorathea Dana. David McKay, \$2.00.

A delightful story half true half make believe of how the four Shuttle trains in New York came to be. But most especially it is the story of Shuttle No. 2 which ran away and never came back. Amusing illustrations of the city. Grades 3-5

J. G. S.

Big Music, or Twenty Merry Tales to Tell. Edited by Mary Noel Bleecker. Illustrated by Louis S. Glanzman. Viking, \$2.50.

Twenty stories that are guaranteed to tickle the risibles of everyone except a self-centered "sour puss." Even he might break down and laugh. All of the stories have been told successfully by children's librarians in the New York Public Library. "Big Music" is the bridge between the traditional folk tales and the modern imaginative stories. This is

not "just another anthology." Real wisdom has entered into the selection resulting in a volume that has the quality of a rainbow. If jumping up and down and cracking your heels together is hard on your rheumatiz', don't say we didn't warn you. D. E. S.

That's Why. By Aileen Fisher. With silhouettes by the author. Nelson.

A new book of rhymes by the author of *The Coffee-Pot Face*. There are poems in all moods—gay, questioning, serious, and full of wonder. A charming collection for children from the "Read it again" to the "Now I can read it myself" age. J. G. S.

Mystery at Laughing Water. By Dorothy Maywood Bird. Illustrations by Gertrude Howe. Macmillan, \$2.00.

A good picture of a girls' camp in northern Michigan with a dash of mystery to entice the reluctant reader. Grades 6-9. Also useful with immature readers in senior high school. J. G. S.

Smoky, the Cowhorse. By Will James. Grosset and Dunlap, \$1.39.

This new edition of Will James' famous story, with the author's original drawings, will be welcomed by all children who love horses. Smoky's life on the range, the adventures of Clint and the other cowboys, the stealing of Smoky by a half-breed, and Clint's heart-breaking search for Smoky,—all this makes a well-balanced story that moves with adventure and pathos to a satisfying ending.

H. M. L.

Miss Emily. By Jean Gould. Illustrated by Ursula Koering. Houghton Mifflin Company, \$2.50.

Here is a fine book that will be of interest to adolescent boys and girls, particularly to those who have read some of Emily Dickinson's lovely poetry.

Emily's teasing, laughter, and gaiety were never understood by her strict, Puritan father. Her timid, gentle mother was often distressed by Emily's soaring fancy and vivid imagination. But between Emily and her brother Austin there was a deep bond of understanding.

Interesting experiences at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, early attempts at writing, and happy friendships are beautifully related

in this story. After Emily's return to Amherst, there is the portrayal of her interests in her garden, in writing, in human beings, and in an earnest search for truth. Truly, the author has caught and revealed the spirit and personality of Emily Dickinson.

H. M. L.

A Cabin for Crusoe. By David Severn. Illustrated by Ursula Koering. Houghton Mifflin Company, \$2.00.

The charming English setting, Whitehouse Farm, lends itself well to the spirit of adventure and excitement which characterizes this book. Four children, with plans for a happy summer together, are irritated by the arrival of an adult visitor, Bill Robinson. They soon regret their display of rudeness, for they discover that Bill, nicknamed "Crusoe," has many interesting ideas about good times. Throughout the story there is lively action centering around the cooperative building of a cabin for Crusoe, the experiences with the band of gypsies, and the helpfulness of Patch Cooper, one of the Romanies.

H. M. L.

Red Mittens. By Laura Bannon. Illustrated by Laura Bannon. Houghton Mifflin, \$1.50.

A well-written story involving repetition in a refreshing style. A kind hen, a friendly cat, and a wide-awake cow with an infectious grin all help Little Joe find his red mittens. Scratch board illustrations especially appealing.

I. G.

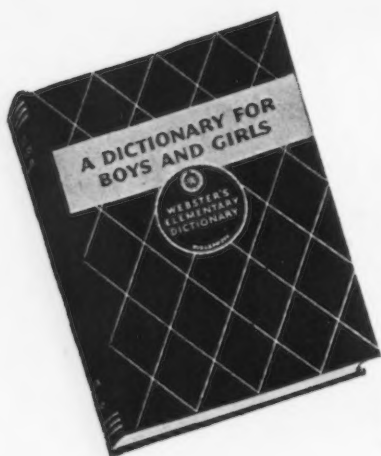
The Very First Day. By Ann Weil. Illustrated by Jessie Robinson. D. Appleton-Century, \$1.50.

Robert, who answers to six different names, finds out at his first day of kindergarten what his name really is. Children about to enter kindergarten will find the two-color illustrations more intriguing than the story.

I. G.

Let's Play! Drawn by Nerman. Compiled by Edward Ernest. Garden City Publishing Company. \$0.50.

These large pages, bright with color, will intrigue every boy and girl from eight to ten with their variety of interesting riddles and puzzles. Teachers who are interested in developing reading skills should welcome this very practical game book for its highly motivated directions.



A Dictionary for Boys and Girls

● 1945 Edition

**American
Book
Company**

Used as a handbook for English, this dictionary is the pupil's most valuable learning tool for it presents inflectional forms and illustrated usage of a carefully selected vocabulary of 38,500 words plus a New Words section giving current terms. The definitions, pronunciation, etc. are based upon Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition, the final word authority for over a century; the dictionary children will use throughout life. Tested in classrooms, it is the teacher's right-hand aid.

BOOKS TO REMEMBER:

LEARNING TO READ

By Nila Banton Smith

The truly basic reading program for
grades 1 to 3

USING WORDS

By Lillian E. Billington

The enriched spelling program for
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115—	The Bakery

Second Grade Level

Book No.	TITLE
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307—	Protection in Nature
308—	Story of Coal
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311—	Wool
312—	Sugar
313—	Plains Indians
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315—	What Animals Eat

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506—	America's Future
507—	Knighthood
508—	Early Explorers
509—	Winning the West
510—	The Weather
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513—	How Plants Multiply
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Book No.	TITLE
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602—	Travel in Latin America
603—	Food from Latin America
604—	Latin American Heroes
605—	Exploring Latin America
606—	Sports of Latin America
607—	Lumber
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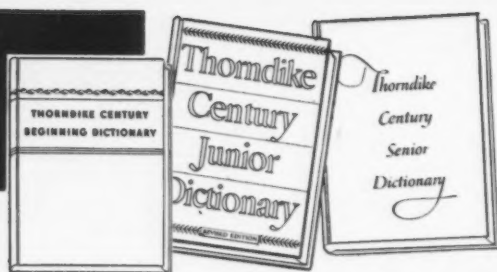
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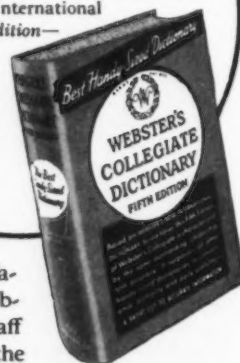
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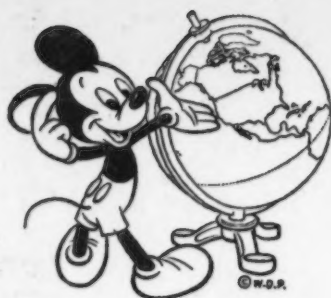
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